



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

HB0577: Department of Housing and Community Development - Homeless Shelter Licensing Program - Establishment

Environment and Transportation

February 16th, 2024: 1:00 PM

Mr. Chair, Madam Vice Chair, and members of the Environment and Transportation Committee, I am Delegate Brooke Grossman, and I am here to testify on behalf of HB577. HB577 will create 5 pins within the Department of Housing and Community Development to establish a homeless shelter licensing division. In 2023, 635,000 homeless individuals were identified by the in the point in time count conducted across the country¹. This represents a 12% increase from 2022 in homelessness and the largest increase in homelessness since 2007². Maryland has made strides toward ending homelessness as there was a 44% decrease in homelessness from 2007 to 2022 and a 16% decrease from 2020 to 2022³. However, Maryland had 5,349 individuals who were experiencing homelessness in 2022 with almost 900 individuals being unsheltered⁴. Currently, only 70 of the nearly 200 shelters that operate in the state of Maryland receive HUD funding which establishes standards for them to follow at the federal level. HB577 would ensure that shelters operating in Maryland are well-equipped and are in compliance with minimum standards to ensure the safety and well-being of residents, volunteers, and staff.

The primary component of this bill creates a new division within DHCD that would provide uniformity for standards related to health and safety, fire, occupancy, admissions, discharge policies, and other aspects to ensure shelter success. These standards would provide that a minimum requirement be satisfied to ensure that shelter residents, regardless of geographic location, receive equitable treatment. DHCD would work in consultation with current service providers to ensure that these standards are reasonable, achievable, and incorporate the feedback of the shelter provider network. Our shelters across the state are doing the much-needed work of providing food, shelter, job assistance, and other communal resources to our most vulnerable citizens. I believe this bill would bolster their efforts to provide accommodations for homeless individuals and further our shared goal of ending homelessness.

I take the charge set forth by Governor Moore to leave no Marylanders behind very seriously. This bill is an innovative and strategic approach to evaluate, support, and strengthen

¹ 2022 Annual Homelessness Assessment Report (AHAR), The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

² 2022 Annual Homelessness Assessment Report (AHAR), The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

³ 2022 Annual Homelessness Assessment Report (AHAR), The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

⁴ 2022 Annual Homelessness Assessment Report (AHAR), The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

our homeless service continuum while protecting and empowering some of our most venerable residents.

I urge a favorable report on HB0577.